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Approved For Release 2003/07/30 : CIA-RDP79B01709A001900060013-3

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5 December 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Requirements for Photographic Reconnaissance of
North Vietnam

1. For some time the intelligence community has been maintaining a special watch for evidence of the introduction of offensive missile systems including cruise missiles with a capability against U.S. Naval Forces into North Vietnam. Concern for this problem became so great in the Spring of 1967 that the BLACK SHIELD Project was authorized in an attempt to meet what were considered to be the essential requirements for the collection of photography pertinent to this problem. The requirement originally envisaged coverage of nine targets in North Vietnam and on the North Vietnamese-Chinese border on as near a daily basis as possible and the weekly coverage of the rest of North Vietnam. Although all available reconnaissance assets including BLACK SHIELD were employed against this requirement, it was never actually met. The BLACK SHIELD Project did acquire photography of substantial portions of North Vietnam on several occasions, and coverage was so extensive that it far outweighed the contribution made by all other reconnaissance systems on this and other intelligence problems.

2. Recently COMIREX reviewed the requirements for coverage of North Vietnam and revised them somewhat. The results of this review were noted by USIB on 24 November 1967. The revised requirement reduced to five the number of targets requiring near daily coverage, listed four targets requiring weekly coverage, and selected two broad areas of North Vietnam for priority coverage weekly. It was believed that the remainder of North Vietnam should be covered every three weeks. Although this is a reduction in the formal requirement, there will probably be substantial periods during which it will not be met by all combined reconnaissance assets.

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NRO review(s)
completed.

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3. The employment of BLACK SHIELD and other reconnaissance assets - especially BLACK SHIELD - against the offensive missile problem has caused a substantial increase in the confidence with which we can evaluate information bearing on this critical problem. In view of the course of the war and the posture of the Soviet Union and Communist China in support of North Vietnam, the possibility of the introduction of offensive missiles remains an attractive communist option that we must guard against.

4. In addition to the search for evidence of the introduction of offensive missiles, we remain concerned with the presence of large numbers of Chinese Communist engineers and anti-aircraft troops in North Vietnam.

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We feel that part of the evidence, however, might well come from photography of the main lines of communication from Communist China to Hanoi. The rail transfer points and storage areas on the North Vietnamese-Chinese border are critical targets in this problem. These targets also provide useful current information concerning the shipment of war materiel from Communist China into North Vietnam.

5. The broad coverage provided by the BLACK SHIELD Project has not only provided photography pertinent to the problems described above, but it has also provided unique support to tactical operations. It has been possible to observe the status of the great majority of the surface-to-air missile firing units in North Vietnam in the course of a single BLACK SHIELD mission. This information is now processed on a priority basis because of its value in assessing North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile capabilities and AOB for use in planning U.S. strike operations. The photography has also been of great value in providing current information on the status of U.S. strike targets in North Vietnam. The BLACK SHIELD photography has reduced the requirement to expose vulnerable reconnaissance aircraft to collect necessary bomb damage assessment photography and has made it possible to assess the status of target systems rather than individual isolated targets. For example, BLACK SHIELD photography made it possible to learn that North Vietnamese

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railroad rolling stock was considerably more numerous than our previous estimates had indicated.

6. Our requirements for coverage of the SAM defended portion of North Vietnam will not be met by any combination of reconnaissance assets without the inclusion of BLACK SHIELD.

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(also sent to [redacted])

The attached was prepared by this office as a result of the State Department's stand at the 303 Committee. The State Department wishes a restatement of the validity of NVN requirements in order to weigh these against the possible political repercussion of trespasses over China. This is an open memorandum, without addressee, as it does not purport to be a consensus but was a means of conveying some information to OSA.

25X1 [redacted]
COMIREX Staff
Room 6E22

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6 Dec 67